DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 354 725 FL 020 905

AUTHOR Chick, J. Keith
TITLE Addressing Contextual Issues Relevant to Language Teaching in South Africa: Implications for Policy and Practice.
PUB DATE 92
NOTE 17p.; For serial issue from which this paper is analyzed, see FL 020 904.
PUB TYPE Information Analyses (070) -- Viewpoints (Opinion/Position Papers, Essays, etc.) (120) -- Journal Articles (080)
JOURNAL CIT Working Papers in Educational Linguistics; v8 n2 p1-16 Fall 1992

EDRS PRICE MF01/PC01 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS Apartheid; Educational Policy; Ethnography; Foreign Countries; Higher Education; *Language Role; Oral Language; *Power Structure; Second Language Instruction; *Social Change
IDENTIFIERS *Compliments (Language); *South Africa

ABSTRACT

The widespread perception amongst advocates for learners from oppressed communities that linguistics are incapable of addressing such issues as the unequal distribution of power in South Africa, or of making their discipline part of the process of democratic transformation is traced to the paucity of studies concerned with the role of language in the establishment, maintenance, and change of social relations of power. To illustrate the sort of research required, this paper focuses on studies of compliment giving and responding behaviour in the fields of ethnography of speaking and critical language study. It also traces the implications of a fuller understanding of the relationships between language and power for language education policy and practice for post-apartheid South Africa. (Author)

****
* Reproductions supplied by EDRS are the best that can be made *
* from the original document. *
****

"PERMISSION TO REPRODUCE THIS MATERIAL HAS BEEN GRANTED BY

Hornberger Nancy

TO THE EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC)."

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION
Office of Educational Research and Improvement
EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC)

This document has been reproduced as received from the person or organization originating it.

☐ Minor changes have been made to improve reproduction quality.

• Points of view or opinions stated in this document do not necessarily represent official OERI position or policy.

ED354725

Addressing contextual issues relevant to language teaching in South Africa: Implications for policy and practice

J. Keith Chick
University of Natal, Urban

The widespread perception amongst advocates for learners from oppressed communities that linguists are incapable of addressing such issues as the unequal distribution of power in South Africa, or of making their discipline part of the process of democratic transformation is traced to the paucity of studies concerned with the role of language in the establishment, maintenance, and change of social relations of power. To illustrate the sort of research required, this paper focuses on studies of compliment giving and responding behaviour in the fields of ethnography of speaking and critical language study. It also traces the implications of a fuller understanding of the relationships between language and power for language education policy and practice for post-apartheid South Africa.

Introduction

Recent dramatic political events in South Africa such as the release from prison of political leaders, the unbanning of liberation movements, and the scrapping of such cornerstones of the apartheid system as the Group Areas Act and Population Registration Act, has led, amongst other things, to the critical scrutiny of most social structures and practices. As a linguist I have been challenged by the widespread perception amongst advocates for learners from oppressed communities that linguists are incapable of addressing such issues as the unequal distribution of power, or of making their discipline relevant to the needs of the oppressed peoples and part of the process of democratic transformation.

There are no doubt many reasons for the perception that linguists have little to contribute to the forging of a democratic, non-racial South Africa. One surely is "mainstream linguistics" focuses on abstract competence and largely ignores contextual factors. More important, I suspect, is that, even in the case of

FL 020 905

BEST COPY AVAILABLE

sociolinguistics, which, by definition, is directly concerned with social context, there has been little research which concerns itself directly with the role of language in the establishment, maintenance, and change of social relations of power. As Fairclough observes, "sociolinguistics is strong on 'what' questions (what are the facts of variation) but weak on 'how' questions (why are the facts as they are?; how—in terms of the development of social relationships of power—was the existing sociolinguistic order brought into being?; how was it sustained?; and how might it be changed to the advantage of those who are dominated by it?) (1989:8).

There are a limited number of studies in the sub-fields of interactional sociolinguistics and the ethnography of speaking in which researchers have attempted to find answers to "how" questions. Indeed, in one of my own interactional sociolinguistic studies (Chick, 1985) I tried to explain how the structural circumstances of the apartheid society impact negatively upon the quality of communication in innumerable interethnic encounters, and how the consequences of miscommunication serve to maintain those structures. Since that study and its implications for language teaching are well documented (Chick 1985, 1986, 1989), I shall not dwell on it any further here. Instead, I shall focus on studies in the ethnography of speaking in which the researchers have also attempted to answer "how" questions. These are studies of compliment giving and responding behaviour. Since I find myself increasingly turning to critical linguistics for answers to "how" questions, I shall provide an account of some of the insights into the relationship between language and power from this source. I shall conclude by outlining what I see as some of the implications of a fuller understanding of the relationship between language and power for language education policy and practice for a post-apartheid South Africa.

Ethnography of speaking: The relationship between language and social relations of power

Within the sub-field of sociolinguistics termed ethnography of speaking the tendency to focus on "what" questions is evident, for example, in Wolfson's earlier work (1981, 1983). She reports on the forms, functions, and distribution of compliments within urban, middle-class American society, and on how these differ from patterns in other societies.

In Wolfson's later work (1988, 1989), however, she asks "how" questions. In other words, she moves beyond the recording of sociolinguistic facts to attempting, amongst other things, to find answers to questions about how social relations of power

are established and maintained. She finds that, although compliments are used mainly in that society to establish and re-affirm solidarity, they are also used to exercise power over others. This is because many compliments involve evaluations of appearance or performance. For example, her findings show that women in middle-class urban American society, irrespective of status, are frequent recipients of such social control by men. Whereas the deference accorded to high-status males places a strong constraint on "personal" comments by subordinates or strangers, there are no such constraints on speech to women of similar high status. As she puts it, "no matter what professional level a woman may attain, she is still treated as a woman" (1989:172). What this account suggests is that compliments are sometimes subtle and powerful mechanisms for exercising power, and, thereby establishing and maintaining asymmetrical power relations.

Other research in the field of ethnography of speaking which addresses questions of how social relations of power are established and maintained, is that of Herbert (Herbert,1985, 1989; Herbert & Straight, 1989). Herbert compares the compliment giving and responding behaviour of white, middle-class Americans at the University of New York at Binghamton and South Africans at the Witwatersrand campus. His data show that whereas Americans tend to give many compliments but accept few, South Africans tend to give few compliments but readily accept them. Herbert and Straight see the differences in these patterns of sociolinguistic behaviour as reflecting or being the outcome of the very different relations of power which obtain in and ideologies which pervade these two societies.

Herbert and Straight suggest that because social relations in the U.S. are relatively fluid, Americans are obliged to use strategies such as complimenting frequently in order to negotiate these relations. They suggest, further, that Americans frequently reject compliments in order to avoid the implication associated with acceptance, namely, that they are superior to their interlocutors. This behaviour they see as consistent with the ideology of egalitarian democracy which most Americans publicly espouse. By contrast, social relations in South Africa are, to a large extent, pre-determined. Middle-class South African whites, accordingly, give few compliments because solidarity with one's peers can be assumed and does not have to be negotiated. They very frequently accept compliments to keep non-equals at a distance by allowing compliments to imply that they are superior to their interlocutors. This behaviour Herbert and Straight see as consistent with the ideology of "institutionalised social inequality publicly enunciated in South Africa" (1989:43).

Herbert, like Wolfson, highlights the role of language in the exercise of power and, thereby, in the establishing and maintaining of the part of social structure concerned with relations of power. In other words, they show how what takes place at the micro-level of conversational interactions affects macro-levels of social organisation. Interestingly, their explanations point to an aspect of the functional ambiguity of compliments. Compliments are used to establish and re-affirm not only solidarity but also status (social relations of power). Moreover, whereas Wolfson shows that speakers may *claim* status for themselves in complimenting, Herbert shows that speakers may *attribute* status to others by the same means.

What neither Wolfson nor Herbert discuss, however, is the opposite side of the coin, namely, how changes at macro levels of social organisation impact upon sociolinguistic behaviour. This is the focus of my own most recent research on the University of Natal in Durban campus (Chick, 1991, 1992a). I have tried, amongst other things, to establish whether or not Herbert's findings are generalisable beyond the Witwatersrand campus, and whether the changed structural conditions associated with desegregation in South Africa has affected speech act performance. The Universities of Natal and the Witwatersrand, though located about 400 miles from one another, have, at least superficially, much in common. They are both English-medium universities. Both, moreover, may be distinguished from Afrikaans-medium and "ethnic" universities established in the apartheid era, by virtue of the advocacy (at least in public statements of their spokespersons) of a liberal educational ideology.

Over a period of three years (1989-91), I collected, with the help of my students, a corpus of compliment giving and responding sequences as they occurred naturally in conversations on campus. To facilitate comparison between Herbert's Witwatersrand corpus collected in 1981-82 and my own corpus collected in 1989-91, I replicated Herbert's methods of collection and analysis as far as possible. For example, I used the same coding system as Herbert. This is a system originally devised by Pomerantz (1978) and subsequently expanded and refined by Herbert. (Table 1).

My corpus includes the compliment giving and responding of members of a range of ethnic groups in inter- as well as intra-ethnic encounters. However, since what is relevant to the issue of generalisation of findings is compliment responses of whites, I shall report on those. Table 2 presents the results of the categorisation, counting and aggregating of compliment responses of whites at the Universities of New York, the Witwatersrand, and Natal.

Table 1:Compliment-response Types

Accepting			
1.	Appreciation token	C:	That's a great cake
		R:	Thank you
2.	Comment response	C:	You have such a nice house
		R:	It's given us a lot of pleasure
Deflating, deflecting, rejection			
3.	Reassignment	C:	You're really a skilled sailor
		R:	This boat virtually sails itself.
4.	Return	C:	You sound really good today.
		R:	I'm just following your lead.
5.	Qualification (agreeing)	C:	Your report came out very well.
		R:	But I need to redo some figures.
6.	Praise downgrade (disagreeing)	C:	Super chip shot.
		R:	It's gone rather high of the pin.
7.	Disagreement	C:	Your shirt is smashing.
		R:	Oh, it's far too loud.
Questioning, ignoring, reinterpreting			
8.	Question (query or challenge)	C:	That's a pretty sweater.
		R:	Do you really think so?
9.	Praise upgrade (often sarcastic)	C:	I really like this soup.
		R:	I'm a great cook.
10.	Comment history	C:	I love that suit.
		R:	I got it at Boscov's.
11.	No acknowledgement	C:	You're the nicest person.
		R:	Have you finished that essay yet?
12.	Request interpretation	C:	I like those pants
		R:	You can borrow them anytime.

Even a cursory examination of these findings will be sufficient to establish that the pattern of compliment responses for the Natal corpus resembles the pattern for the New York corpus more closely than that for the Witwatersrand corpus. Whereas only 23.7% responses in the Witwatersrand corpus involves saying something that can be interpreted as a rejection or partial rejection (i.e., 15.8 and 7.9), as many as 64.0% of responses in the Natal corpus fall into this category (i.e., 25.2 and 38.8). This is very close to the percentage for the New York corpus, namely 64.1% (i.e., 31.4 and 32.7).

Table 2: Distribution of compliment-responses

		New York		Witwatersrand		Natal	
		#	%	#	%	#	%
Accepting							
1.	Appreciation token	312	29.4	162	32.9	42	30.2
2.	Coment acceptance	70	6.6	213	43.2	8	5.8
			36.0		76.1		36.0
Deflating, deflecting, rejecting							
3.	Reassignment	32	3.0	23	4.7	3	2.2
4.	Return	77	7.3	12	3.4	0	0.0
5.	Qualification (agreeing)	70	6.6	12	2.4	10	7.2
6.	Praise downgrade (disagreeing)	106	10.0	0	0.0	7	5.0
7.	Disagreement	106	10.0	0	0.0	7	5.0
			31.4		15.8		25.2
Questioning, ignoring, reinterpreting							
8.	Question (query or challenge)	53	5.0	9	1.8	19	13.7
9.	Praise upgrade (often sarcastic)	4	0.4	2	0.2	5	3.6
10.	Comment history	205	19.3	24	4.9	12	8.6
11.	No acknowledgement	54	5.1	1	0.2	16	11.5
12.	Request interpretation	31	2.9	4	0.8	2	1.4
			32.7		7.9		38.8
	Totals	1062	100.1	492	99.8	139	100.0

What these findings suggest is that it is not possible to generalise Herbert's findings about the sociolinguistic norms of whites on the Witwatersrand campus to white, middle-class South Africans as a whole. Since no data is available for the Durban campus in 1981-82, it is not possible to exclude the possibility that the difference between the compliment responding behaviour on the two campuses represents regional variation. Herbert's report (personal communication) that the pattern of responses in a corpus he collected on the Witwatersrand campus in 1990 resembles more closely the pattern evident in my Natal corpus than that in the Witwatersrand corpus collected a decade earlier. This suggests that the data reflect, instead, change of norms of middle-class, English speaking South African whites over time. If what we have is historical change in norms, such change may be a response to structural changes in the wider society in general and tertiary educational institutions in particular, as a consequence of the waning influence of apartheid ideology.

One notable change in such institutions is de-segregation, the pace of which, in the case of the University of Natal, may be seen in Table 3.

Table 3: University of Natal student numbers by race categories employed in the apartheid era, 1983-1992

		1983	1986	1989	1992
AFRICAN	Number	542	1030	1714	2860
	% of total	5.53	8.93	13.20	19.75
"COLOURED"	Number	230	239	289	292
	% of total	2.35	2.07	2.23	2.02
INDIAN	Number	1100	1762	2258	3174
	% of total	11.22	15.27	17.39	21.92
WHITE	Number	7928	8509	8720	8156
	% of total	80.90	73.73	67.18	56.32
TOTAL	Number	9800	11540	12981	14482

Whereas these statistics apply to the University of Natal as a whole, that is both the Durban and Pietermaritzburg campuses, the compliment giving and responding sequences were collected on the Durban campus only. However, since the same policy of admission applies in both campuses, it provides a reliable indication of the pace of de-segregation on the Durban campus.

One can reasonably assume that the presence of significant numbers of black students on this campus would, of itself, have been a spur to white students to question conventional power relations and privileges. It has, moreover, given them greater exposure to the ideas and values associated with ideologies of liberation socialism which many black students espouse. It is perhaps significant that desegregation phase has co-incided with growing student demands for representation on university decision-making bodies, and the tendency to protest against anything that smacks of elitism. No doubt political instability and the decline of the economy, which characterised the 1980s, will also have served to undermine the unquestioning assumption of many whites that their high status will be an enduring feature of South African society. It may be, therefore, that what the putative historical change in the pattern of compliment responses on the University of Natal campus reflects is the greater uncertainty about social relations in that desegregating institution, and the

greater concern by whites to avoid the implication associated with acceptance, namely, that they are superior to their interlocutors.

In summary, Wolfson and Herbert show that certain sociolinguistic behaviours may be used to develop and maintain social relations of power. My study shows that sociolinguistic behaviours may change over time in response to uncertainty about social relations that results from rapid socio-political, economic, and demographic change. In search of further understanding of the relationships between action at the micro-level of social interaction and macro levels of social organisation, I turn to critical language study.

Critical language study and the relationship between language and social relations of power

Critical linguists see the formal properties of texts as the traces of the productive processes and as cues to the interpretative processes used by interlocutors as they engage in spoken and written discourse (Fairclough, 1989:24). They explain that these properties reflect the particular lexical and syntactic choices the interlocutors make as they produce texts which are exemplars of the discourse types associated with particular social institutions or domains within them. An example is the choices made in producing a text which is an exemplar of one or other of the discourse types associated with policing as a social institution: making an arrest; charging a suspect; interrogating a suspect; and so on. They explain, further, that the linguistic choices interlocutors make have implications for the relations of power that obtain not only between the interlocutors, but between groups of people in the institution and the society as a whole.

Central to their understanding of the relationship between ways of speaking and writing, and the social relations of power is the notion of ideological power. They use the word "ideology" not in the "neutral" or "descriptive" sense that I have used it in referring to apartheid and liberation socialism. Rather, they have a critical conception of ideology (Thompson, 1987). They argue that in modern societies power is exercised increasingly through consent rather than coercion, and that it is primarily through ideology that consent of oppressed peoples is accomplished. They view ideologies as "common sense assumptions" about relationships of power in societal institutions, and claim that the dominant ideologies of such institutions are implicit in the conventions of the discourse types associated with them. For example, they believe that the discourse conventions associated with medical consultations, such as

who has the rights and obligations to initiate the interaction, regulate turn-taking and so on, reflect the dominant ideologies of medicine as a social institution, i.e., they reflect the answers that power holders give to questions about the nature of the roles of doctor and patient, about what constitutes professional behaviour and so on. Moreover, these conventions serve to establish social roles (subject positions) for doctors and patients. In other words, it is only by complying with these conventions that the interlocutors can take on their role as patients and doctors. Power holders are able to exercise ideological power because they are usually well placed to project their own discourse conventions as the "right," "natural," or "universal" way of doing things, i.e., to make their conventions "stick." To the extent that members of subordinate groups uncritically accept the conventions of the power holders as "right" or "natural" or "common sense" ways of interacting, and behave accordingly, they sustain and legitimise the relations of power which underlie them.

The exercise of ideological power can be observed at a number of levels. As noted already, a particular group may gain and hold onto power by projecting particular discourse types or the conventions associated with these types as "natural" or "right" in certain domains. At higher levels, a group may accomplish the same ends by getting the status of its own dialect or language elevated so that it becomes the standard dialect, or national or official medium. The dominant group is able to build and consolidate its power by getting other groups to accept the use of its dialect or language in a wide range of domains. As Fairclough (1989) explains, power holders secure compliance by a number of means. They secure by means of *codification* (the reduction of variation within this dialect through dictionaries, grammars, and so forth). They secure it by means of *prescription* and *stigmatisation* of other social dialects, not only in terms of correctness of form, but in terms of their manners, morality, life style, and so on. Then, too, they secure it by means of the colonisation of the discourses of an ever wider range of social institutions, thus making competency in the standard dialect or language a pre-requisite for elevation to positions of power and influence.

Ethnographers of speaking like Wolfson and Herbert, show how asymmetrical relations of power may be established and maintained by sociolinguistic means. The unique contribution of critical linguists, though, is to the understanding of how, again through socioliguistic means, these relations may be changed to the advantage of those dominated by them.

They explain that while power holders always try to impose an ideological common sense which holds for everyone by getting their discourse types accepted as the "natural ones" in those situations, ideological homogeneity is never achieved.

Ideological diversity and struggle over discourse types is particularly evident in institutions and the wider society where social relations of power are fluid, as they are to an unprecedented extent in South Africa today. Since discourse conventions reflect ideological assumptions, the struggle for power takes place both through language and over language. This is very evident in feminist advocacy of particular discourse conventions such as gender-neutral terms of address. The group which is able to make the conventions associated with its preferred discourse type "stick" in a particular domain is able to establish and legitimise the social relations of power which underlie them.

The notion of ideological struggle provides a means of understanding more fully how the compliment giving and responding behaviour referred to in the first section of this paper may be used to establish and sustain asymmetrical social relations of power. Rephrasing Wolfson's explanation of how compliments are used by men to exercise power over women, one could say that in urban, middle-class American society a man of even relatively low status is able to position himself as someone who is able to evaluate the appearance or performance of a woman of relatively high status, and position her as someone subject to such evaluation, by complimenting her. He could, for example, say, "Nice sweater."

The positioning implicit in this compliment would be difficult for her to resist because the New York results suggest that the use of a token of any one of the twelve response types listed in Table 1 could be construed as compliance with this positioning. This would be especially the case if she chose what, in the New York data, is a high-frequency type, such as *comment history* (10): "My husband gave it to me."

Perhaps more important, the notion of ideological struggle suggests an explanation of how relations of power may be changed through this means. Critical language study reveals that no one is ever completely trapped by convention. Referring again to the Wolfson example, the woman in question could, for example, contest the implicit positioning by using what is a low-frequency choice in Herbert's New York data, namely, *praise upgrade:* "It's the height of fashion (sarcastic)."

She could contest this positioning more explicitly by using a token of the "question" (8) type of response, which challenges, not the sincerity of the complimenter, as in the example in Table 1, but the assumption that the speaker has the right to compliment her: "When did you become an authority on fashion?"

What this suggests is that the explanation I gave for the putative change in patterns of compliment responses on the University of Natal campus may be incomplete. While the change may, indeed, be a response to the sub-conscious

recognition by members of the dominant group that the choices of the past are no longer appropriate, it may also be the outcome of ideological struggle in a range of inter- and intra-cultural encounters on campus.

Ideological struggle also takes place about which dialects and languages are to be used in a range of public domains. It is significant that one of the recommendations which emerged from the 1990 Harare Workshop hosted by the African National Congress was that, if English is to be the major lingua franca in post-apartheid South Africa, it has to be made more accessible, and that documents, forms, and public proceedings should be written or conducted in a language understandable to ordinary people (Desai, 1990:27). This recommendation is a call for significantly different conventions in a range of discourse types associated with bureaucratic systems of institutions. The goal would be to ensure that discourse helps the oppressed to gain access to opportunities and resources rather than prevents them from doing so. The possibility of struggle at another level is alluded to by Heugh (1990). She claims that liberation movements are going to insist on a "democratised variety" of English as the spoken standard. This could be viewed as an early stage in the process of re-standardisation of English in the direction of an indigenous African variety of English.

To summarize, those involved in critical language study, like the sociolinguists whose research has been reviewed above, show that assumptions about social relations of power are implicit in conventional sociolinguistic behaviour/ discourse conventions. They show that groups are able to build and consolidate their power by projecting their conventions and the power relations implicit in them as natural. Most important, they show how change in social relations of power is accomplished by sociolinguistic means.

Implications for Language Education Policy and Practice

I now turn my attention to the implications of these insights into the relationship between language and social relations of power for language teaching policy and practice that might empower learners from oppressed communities in South Africa.

One way of empowering oppressed peoples in South Africa would be to make it possible for them to use their own languages and dialects for a wide range of purposes in government, education, science and technology, and the economy. I predict that one of the long-term objectives of official language policy will be the development and promotion of proficiency in indigenous languages so that they may serve as media in an ever widening range of public domains. However, for a number

of historical, economic and political reasons (Chick, 1992b), it is likely that, in the short term, English will be used as the primary medium in central government, in commerce and industry, and in post-primary education.

The obvious danger is that this policy may promote neo-colonialism by putting power in the hands of an English-speaking elite. To prevent this, the policy would need to be accompanied by practices designed to promote a high level of profiency in English amongst the mass of the population. What the research reviewed above suggests is that this can be achieved only if the focus of language instruction is communicative competence. In other words it will need to be concerned not merely with linguistic competence, but also with sociolinguistic and discourse competence. Indeed, as Wolfson explains, in some circumstances, linguistic competence on its own may be a disadvantage to those who possess it. This is because learners who speak grammatically are often held accountable for sociolinguistic violations in ways that less competent speakers are not, because they are "unconsciously assumed to be equally knowledgeable about the sociolinguistic rules of that community" (1989:49).

It is a matter of some controversy as to whether, in the light of the range of variability involved, the sociolinguistic and discourse components of communicative competence can be taught. For those who believe that description needs to precede materials construction there is the problem that, even in the case of English, which has been the focus of considerable sociolinguistic investigation[1] a comprehensive description of the discourse or sociolinguistic conventions of even a single speech community is not yet available. Account will need to be taken, also, of the fact that these conventions change, sometimes rapidly.

Fortunately, what is required is probably less emphasis on direct instruction about how to compliment, address people, or take turns appropriately, and more the development of sociolinguistic awareness. As Wolfson points out, what is at the root of most miscommunication between people of differing ethnic and linguistic backgrounds is not so much ignorance of sociolinguistic rules as ignorance of the very existence of sociolinguistic diversity (1989:15). People ignorant of sociolinguistic diversity tend to judge speech behaviour of people with differing rules of speaking, usually negatively, in terms of their own standards. This tendency, I suggest, can be countered by the development of learners' sociolinguistic or pragmatic awareness and of their lay abilities for pragmatic analysis. Bardovi-Harlig, Hartford, Mahan-Taylor, Morgan, and Reynolds (1991) provide suggestions as to how this might be accomplished.

However, to be truly empowering, practice needs to go beyond helping students to become aware of the conventions of the dominant discourses in a wide range of

institutions. They need, also, to become aware that many of these conventions reflect asymmetrical social relations of power, and that their compliance in interacting consistent with them serves to legitimize such conventions and maintain the power structures in those institutions. Such critical awareness could help them to be assertive, to contest and to disagree in situations where formerly their ignorance of the relationships between language and power, and their low status, as determined by the dominant discourse, would have encouraged them to be compliant.

It is such concerns that has led Pierce, for example, to challenge the apparent reasonableness of identifying communicative competence as the goal in English second language teaching in South Africa (1990:5). She points out that this begs the question of who is to determine what kind of communicative competence is appropriate for learners, or, whose conventions are to be made to stick? Such reasoning led the People's English Commission of the National Education Crisis Committee (NECC), which is affiliated with the African National Congress, to identify as the goal of second language teaching a wider definition of language competence than merely a knowledge of the rules of correct and appropriate use of English within South African society. It includes, according to NECC, "the ability to say and write what one means; to hear what is said and what is hidden; to defend one's point of view; to argue, to persuade, to negotiate; to create, to reflect, to invent; to explore relationships, personal, structural, political; to speak, read, and write with confidence; to make one's voice heard; to read print and resist it where necessary" (1987).

The materials that Janks (1991) has been developing together with teachers and learners suggest what sort of practice would foster the necessary *critical* awareness. Included in these materials, for example, is a module that is designed to help learners become aware of the ways in which writers use language to position their readers, i.e., constrain them to operate within the social role or subject position set up by the discourse conventions used. The abstract notion of social role or subject position is introduced gradually, firstly by an activity designed to demonstrate that "where we stand" literally "affects what we see." To demonstrate how critical study can be used to "denaturalise" conventions, learners are asked to examine maps used in Japan and Australia which challenge conventional ways of representing the world. They show these two countries in the centre of the world with Africa and Europe on the West and America in the Far East. This exercise is tied to another which examines the positive connotations in dominant discourse of "up" words such as "top," "high," and "boost" and negative connotations of "down" words such as "dropped" and "low." In this way learners become aware of the positioning implicit in the linguistic encodings

of living "down under" and in the "Far East." This is followed by exercises in which learners are asked to consider how age, gender, race, and so forth might affect a person's position on political, intellectual, and emotional issues. They are invited to role play competing siblings using language to win their mother over to their position. The learners, thereafter, are given the opportunity to discover how writers use language to position their readers by being provided with a number of texts to "de-construct," such as two accounts of the same battle, one from the point of view of the conqueror and one from the point of view of the conquered or underclass. Finally, they are asked to consider the naming of streets and public holidays from history, and the struggles which occur over whose history the names should be drawn from.

Conclusion

In this paper I have suggested that one of the principal reasons for the perceived irrelevance of linguistics to the democratic struggle in South Africa is the paucity of research concerned with the establishment, maintenance, and change in social relations of power, or as I have expressed it here, concerned with answering "how" questions. As an attempt less to argue for the relevance of the discipline than to identify for myself and others what it can contribute, I have reviewed studies which do attend to "how" questions, and have attempted to trace the implication of these studies for language policy and practice in South Africa. While the focus throughout has been on the South African situation, I trust that it will be possible to draw parallels with other situations.[2]

---

[1] For studies of complimenting see Wolfson, 1981, 1983, 1988; Holmes & Brown, 1987. See Takahashi & Beebe's 1987 study of refusals. See Sacks, Schegloff, & Jefferson, 1974; Bennett, 1981; and Edelsky, 1981 on turn-taking conventions.

[2] An earlier version of this paper was presented in April 1992 at a conference on Linguistics and the Professions under the title of "A role for linguistics in addressing contextual issues relevant to second language teaching" and will be published in SPIL Plus. This paper was presented in November 1992 at the Educational Linguistics Fall Colloquium, University of Pennsylvania. I am grateful for a Fulbright African Senior Research Fellowship and a Centre for Science Development Senior Research Grant that made it possible for me to have uninterrupted time to do further reading, to analyse my data more closely, think through the argument I had started to develop in the earlier version, and re-write considerable parts of it.

References

Ashley, M. (1989). Ideologies and schooling in South Africa. Rondebosch: SATA.

Bardovi-Harlig, K., Hartford, B., Mahan-Taylor, R., Morgan, M. & Reynolds, D. (1991). Developing pragmatic awareness: Closing the conversation. ELT Journal, 45 (1), 4-15.

Chick, J. K. (1985). The international accomplishment of discrimination in South Africa. Language in Society, 14 (3), 299-326.

Chick, J. K. (1986). Interactional perspectives on communicative needs of Zulu work seekers. Journal of Multilingual and Multicultural Development, 7 (6), 476-491.

Chick, J. K. (1989). Intercultural miscommunication as a source of friction in the workplace and in educational settings in South Africa. In O. Garcia & R. Ortheguy (Eds.) English across cultures: Cultures across English (130-160). Mouton de Gruyter.

Chick, J. K. (1991). An ethnography of a desegregating institution: Research in progress. South African Journal of Linguistics, 9(4), 110-115.

Chick, J. K. (1992a). Language, ideology and social structure. Pietermaritzburg: University of Natal Press.

Chick, J. K. (1992b). Language policy in education. In R. McGregor & A. McGregor (Eds.), Educational alternatives. Kenwyn: Juta.

Desai, Z. (1990). Impressions of the Harare Language Workshop. Language Projects Review, 5(2), 26-28.

Edelsky, C. (1981). Who's got the floor. Language in society, 10(3), 383-421.

Fairclough, N. (1989). Language and power. London & New York: Longman.

Herbert, R. K. (1985). Say "thank you"—or something. American Speech, 61(1), 76-88.

Herbert, R. K. (1989). The ethnography of English compliments and compliment responses: A contrastive sketch. In W. Olesky (Ed.), Contrastive pragmatics. Amsterdam/Philadelphia: John Benjamins.

Herbert, R. K. & Straight H. S. (1989). Compliment-rejection versus compliment-avoidance: Listener-based versus speaker-based pragmatic strategies. Language and Communication, 9, 35-47.

Heugh, K. (1990). Language policy in education. Language Projects Review, 5(3), 15-17.

Holmes, J. & Brown, D. (1987). Teachers and students learning about compliments. TESOL Quarterly, 21(3), 523-546.

Janks, H. (1991). A critical approach to the teaching of language. Educational Review, 43(2), 191-199.

National Education Crisis Committee (1987). NECC press release 1986. In People's Education for Teachers. Bellville: University of the Western Cape.

Pierce, B. (1990). Student writing, the DET syllabus and matric marking: a critical evaluation. ELTIC Reporter, 15(3), 3-11.

Pomerantz, A. (1978). Compliment responses: Notes on the co-operation of multiple constraints. In J. Schenken (Ed.), Studies in the organization of conversational interaction (79-109). Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Sacks, H., Schegloff, E. & Jefferson, G. (1974). A simplest systematics for the analysis of turn-taking in conversation. Language, 50, 696-735.

Takahashi, T. & Beebe, L. (1987). Development of pragmatic competence by Japanese learners of English. JALT Journal, 8,(2).

Thompson, J.B. (1987). Language and ideology: a framework for analysis. The Sociolinguistic Review, 35, 3: 517-536.

Wolfson, N. (1981). Compliments in cross-cultural perspective. TESOL Quarterly, 15, 117-24.

Wolfson, N. (1983). An empirically based analysis of complimenting in American English. In N. Wolfson & E. Judd (Eds.), Sociolinguistics and language acquisition. Rowley, MA: Newbury House.

Wolfson, N. (1988). The bulge: A theory of speech behavior and social distance. In J. Fine (Ed.), Second language discourse: A textbook of current research. Norwood, NJ: Ablex.

Wolfson, N. (1989). Perspectives: Sociolinguistics and TESOL. Cambridge: Newbury House.